



The National Park Service Requests Your Input for Visitor Center Planning

Spring 2006

The National Park Service is now planning options for replacing the USS Arizona Memorial Visitor Center. The existing shoreside facility has structural problems, and engineers estimate that it has a life expectancy of 3 to 8 years. In addition, the building is inadequate to provide high-quality interpretation of this important site for the visitors who come to the park annually.

Our goal is to provide a visitor center that compliments the memorial and what it stands for, meets visitor expectations, supports high quality visitor experiences, and is structurally sound.

An environmental assessment will be prepared during the planning process to evaluate the effects of a range of management alternatives on the natural and human environment.

This scoping letter provides background information on the visitor center and provides information on how you can be involved in the planning process.

An important part of the planning and compliance process is understanding the interests and priorities of the public. Therefore, we request your input on the issues and concerns that are important to you regarding the USS Arizona Memorial Visitor Center. I encourage your participation.

Douglas A. Lentz, Superintendent
USS Arizona Memorial

Background on the USS Arizona Memorial Visitor Center

The USS *Arizona* Memorial is a unit of the National Park Service (NPS). It honors U.S. servicemen who lost their lives during the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. It is the second most visited national park site in the Pacific and hosts 1.5 million visitors each year. The memorial's museum and visitor center overlooks Pearl Harbor and the USS *Arizona* Memorial. Visitors first enter the visitor center to receive tickets for the program. While waiting for it to begin they can view the interpretive messages and exhibits to gain an understanding of why and how the attack on December 7, 1941 took place. When the program starts, an orientation film is presented prior to traveling to the memorial by shuttle boat. Upon return from the memorial, the visitor center is the last stop before leaving the park. Thus, the visitor center plays a central role in the interpretation and visitor experience of the USS *Arizona* Memorial.

If not replaced, the visitor center is likely to be closed to the public in 3 to 8 years, due to poor structural integrity. Although the visitor center buildings were designed to settle, structural engineers determined they have surpassed the maximum distance that they should have settled. This sinking is causing the buildings to torque, which in turn causes cracks in the concrete. Steel reinforcement bars are now exposed and rusting, which has increased the amount of maintenance repairs. Repairs to the facility are expected to increase until they are not cost effective or reasonable.

Addressing these concerns provides the NPS with an opportunity to design a visitor center and interpretive program to better meet the needs of the memorial and the public. Over-crowding is of concern, as the building was designed to accommodate up to 750,000 visitors per year and current visitation is double that. Visitor flow is a big consideration. Improvements to exhibits and interpretive messages need to be made to enhance visitor understanding and appreciation. Also, artifacts and photographs contained in the memorial's collection would be better protected from humidity and termites present in the existing building. The restrooms and other facilities are also inadequate. The planning and compliance effort for this project will address these concerns. In addition, planning for future commercial services at the memorial will soon begin. This plan will determine what types of concession operations are necessary and appropriate at the memorial.

What are the opportunities for involvement in the planning process?

We recognize that you may have ideas for or concerns about the project and would like to hear from you. Please send a letter or provide comments on the following page, and return it to the park at:

USS *Arizona* Memorial
Attn: Visitor Center Environmental Assessment
1 Arizona Memorial Place
Honolulu HI 96818

You can check the status of public involvement and the overall planning process by visiting the following website: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>. You are invited to comment while visiting the website. Please provide us with your comments by June 9, 2006 so that we may consider them during early planning efforts. In the near future, you will be able to obtain information and comment on the upcoming commercial services plan at this website.

It is the practice of the NPS to make comments available for public review at the conclusion of the planning and compliance process. You may request to withhold your information from disclosure. If you wish to do so, state this at the beginning of your comment. Those using the website can make this request by checking the box "keep my contact information private." The NPS will honor such requests to the extent allowable by law, but the NPS may be required to disclose your name and address under the Freedom of Information Act. We will make submissions from organizations or businesses available for public inspection in their entirety.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
USS *Arizona* Memorial
1 Arizona Memorial Place
Honolulu, HI 96818

Please print clearly and provide your comments by June 9, 2006 so we can include your input in our early planning efforts.

Name and Address:

Comment:



Public meetings will be held as part of the planning and compliance process. The dates and locations of these meetings will be posted on the NPS website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>. We look forward to hearing from you or meeting with you soon.

*Thank you for helping plan for the future of the
USS Arizona Memorial Visitor Center!*